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### III.—THE CHRONOLOGY OF OVID'S EARLY WORKS.

Perhaps the most important source for determining the order in which Ovid's early works appeared is the eighteenth poem of Book II of his *Amores*. A growing doubt as to whether this poem has ever been correctly interpreted, leads me to consider, in a summary fashion, the general question of the chronology of Ovid's early works. Not pausing to examine Ovid's vague references to a poem on the *Gigantomachia*, which, if written at all, was a product of his extreme youth, we may centre our attention on the *carmina amatoria*.

From a remark in the poet's brief autobiography (*Tristia*, 4, 10, 57), it is clear that his poems on *Corinna*—the *Amores*, therefore—are his earliest work. But turning to one of the *Amores* (2, 18) we find Ovid telling his friend *Macer* that he is at present employed either in "professing the arts of gentle love" or in writing *Heroides*. He mentions also his previous contribution to tragedy. I cite the lines which concern our present problem from the text of *Merkel-Ehwald*.

Sceptra tamen sumpsî, curaque tragoedia nostra  
Crevit et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram.

\* \* \* \*

Quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris,  
(Ei mihi ! praeceptis urgeor ipse meis)  
Aut, quod *Penelopes* verbis reddatur *Ulixi*,  
Scribimus et lacrimas, *Phylli* relictâ, tuas,  
Quod *Paris* et *Macareus* et quod male gratus *Iaso*  
Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,  
Quodque tenens strictum *Dido* miserabilis ensem  
Dicat et *Aoniae Lesbis* † amata lyrae.

The solution of the main difficulty to which the above passage gives rise has long been known : as Ovid tells us in the quatrain prefixed to the *Amores* that there were two editions of the work, the first in five, the second in three books, we can assume still that his earliest publication was the *Amores*, in five books ; we see also, from the letter to *Macer*, that after writing *Amores*, Ovid felt a higher call and turned to tragedy,<sup>1</sup> that this work was

<sup>1</sup>See also *Amores* 3, 15.

followed by the *Heroides* and further love-poems of the kind he had written first, and that these—among them, of course, 2, 18—with whatever poems of the first edition he chose to preserve, were gathered into a second edition of *Amores*, in three books.

The second edition, I think we may safely infer, followed the final publication of the *Heroides*. For although Ovid apparently speaks of himself as still at work on these latter poems (*scribimus*)<sup>1</sup> he mentions as many as nine of the fifteen that we know, in the order 1, 2, 5, 11, 6, 10, 4, 7, 15. I agree emphatically with Jacoby, who, in his important article on the Roman elegy,<sup>2</sup> infers that in mentioning the letter of Penelope first and that of Sappho last, Ovid is describing a collection identical with that which we possess. Ovid does not mention all the pieces and he does not adhere to the order observed in our present collection, but then, he was writing poetry and not a library catalogue. Moreover, he goes on to tell of the answers to the heroines' missives written in short order by his friend Sabinus. "How soon", he says, "did my Sabinus return from belting the globe, and bring back despatches from places far apart!"

Quam cito de toto rediit meus orbe Sabinus  
Scriptaque diversis rettulit ille locis!

This looks, certainly, as if Ovid had published a collection before Sabinus started his answers; as Ovid pictures him, he goes at full speed with his missives from hero to hero, returning with a bagful of replies. Finally, the list of these letters begins with one to Penelope and ends with one to Sappho—the first and the last, once more, in our present collection. Only six answers are mentioned, in the order 1, 4, 7, 2, 6, 15, but that suffices Ovid's purpose. It may well be, then, that Ovid had finished his first series of *Heroides* only a short time, a month, let us say, before writing the present epistle to Macer. Sabinus had dashed off his answers in a fortnight or so—rapidly enough, at any rate, to cause even the facile Ovid astonishment—and the whole affair is so fresh in Ovid's mind that he naturally uses the present tense.

There is a simpler, and I think, better explanation of the present *scribimus*. It refers not to the exact time when the poet

<sup>1</sup> Schanz, *Gesch. der röm. Litteratur* § 293 sees only this meaning in the word.

<sup>2</sup> *Rhein. Mus.* LX (1905), p. 71. Jacoby's main thesis, it seems to me, though plausibly presented, is by no means proved.

is engaged on a certain work, but to what in general the subjects are that at present attract him. Thus the opening lines to his friend

Carmen ad iratum dum tu perducis Achillen  
Primaque iuratis induis arma viris

mean not that Macer has not yet finished his *Antehomerica*, but that he is an epic poet. Ovid, in contrast, is a poet who sings of love or writes letters for desolate heroines. The present tenses are generally, not specifically, present. *Scribimus* applies to a period in Ovid's career, not to the exact moment when he sent this letter to his friend. One sharply marked contrast in time is evident, the contrast between Ovid's present occupation and the days when he wrote his tragedy (*sumpsi . . . crevit . . . eram*)—the days when he, too, attempted the higher style. One period is set off against the other. But Ovid could apply the present tense to any one of several distinct works appearing in the latter period. The *Heroides*, therefore, may have been completed and given to the world not merely a month, but a year or more before the letter to Macer was written.

This explanation of Ovid's use of the present tense, though made most probable, I believe, by the above considerations, is established with certainty by the evidence of a later letter to Macer, the beautiful and pathetic poem sent by the exiled Ovid to his friend (*Ex Pont.*, 2, 10). Here Ovid, revealing for once a sincere and poignant grief, speaks of the *communia sacra* of poets, and of the wiser use his friend had made of poetry (l. 11);

Studiis quibus es quam nos sapientius usus.

For his theme is not love, but rather

Tu canis aeterno quidquid restabat Homero  
Ne careant summa Troica bella manu.  
Naso parum prudens, artem dum tradit amanti,  
Doctrinae pretium triste magister habet.

Certainly Ovid does not mean that his brother-poet, some twenty-five years after the earlier letter, is still toiling patiently on the *Antehomerica*, or that he himself, amid the terrors of Siberia, is composing appeals to the *ianitor*, and instructing Corinna in the art of assignation. He does not mean either, to refer by contrast to past achievements: were this his intention, he would have used past tenses. He refers generally to the varieties of poetry for which he and his friend are and have been known. Finally, the model for both of these letters of Ovid is a poem of

Propertius (1, 7) addressed to his friend Ponticus, like Macer, a writer of epic.

Dum tibi Cadmeae dicuntur, Pontice, Thebae  
Armaque fraternae tristia militiae,  
Atque, ita sim felix, primo contendis Homero,

\* \* \* \*

Nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores.

It does not concern us to inquire how many elegies Propertius had finished when he wrote these words. He wrote others later, and doubtless Ovid's collection of *Amores* was not complete when he sent his earlier letter to Macer. But the *Heroides*, despite the present tense, might have been finished at that time, just as the *Amores* and the *Art of Love* were, when he wrote Macer again at the close of his life. In both poems the intention is not to fix a definite date, but to associate the writer's name with a definite variety of poetry—in the words of Propertius (l. 10),

Hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, haec mea fama est,  
Hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei.

If we may accept, then, the fact that the *Heroides* were already published when Ovid wrote his first letter to Macer, the chronological order of the works thus far discussed must be as follows: *Amores* (first edition), *Medea*, *Heroides*, *Amores* (second edition)<sup>1</sup>.

It would be natural, further, to suppose that this series of works antedated the didactic poems—*De Medicamine Faciei*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*—were it not for a statement in the letter to Macer which has already, doubtless, attracted the reader's attention. Ovid declares not only that he has been writing *Heroides* but also that he is "professing the arts of gentle love". Schanz repeats (§ 293) what I think has been the universal opinion from the humanists to the latest editor of the *Amores*, that Ovid here refers to his didactic masterpiece, the *Ars Amatoria*. Herewith, new complexities are introduced. If we may argue, as I have just done for the *Heroides*, that the

<sup>1</sup> Tolkiehn, in a recent note (*Wochenschrift f. klass. Philol.* 1906, p. 1208 ff.) is inclined to the belief, for which he adduces no new evidence, that the *Heroides* preceded the *Medea* and even the *Corinna* poems. I am confident that this idea, which Riese, too, held (I p. ix of his edition, 1871), may be easily refuted from what we have already found in Ovid's earlier letter to Macer. Riese's appeal to the order of the poems in the Parisinus is irrelevant, for of course the *Heroides* should precede, in a chronological arrangement, the *final* edition of the *Amores* in three books.

work was already completed, the second edition of *Amores* must have followed the *Ars Amatoria*, and, of course, the *De Medicinae Faciei*, to which Ovid refers in the latter work (A. A. 3, 205). This would put the date of the final edition of the *Amores* very late, since certain historical allusions indubitably place the *Art of Love* between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D. The *Amores* were begun, we may infer with Schanz (§ 293), about 22 B. C. The earliest date alluded to in any of the poems in our collection is 19 B. C., the latest is 15 B. C.; beyond these facts we have no certain evidence as to the date of either edition.<sup>1</sup> Supposing the first edition appeared as late, even, as 15 B. C.,—we can hardly suppose that Ovid spent *more* than eight years on his earliest work—there would intervene between the two editions what impresses me as the incredibly lengthy period of fourteen or fifteen years. Judging merely by Ovid's lively temperament, his facility at writing verse, or, as he puts it, his inability to write prose, I should be inclined to date the first edition early, about 19 or 18 B. C., including in the second edition *Amores* 1, 14, which alludes to the date 15 B. C.

This dating, of course would make it still less possible to place the second edition after the *Art of Love*. Full eighteen years would intervene between the two editions—and Ovid certainly is no adviser of the *twice* "nine years pondered lay". He was temperamentally averse to revising. He left his greatest work, the *Metamorphoses*, unrevised, preferring to begin a new poem, the *Fasti*. This was half-finished when his exile was declared; he did revise it later, hoping that the poem, with its new dedication to Germanicus, might effect his recall. Here emendation had a purpose. The revision of the *Amores* consisted in the addition of certain subsequent pieces, and the exclusion of two-fifths of the original poems. As with much of the verse written during his exile, he gave them, to use his phrase, to the "emending flames". That was his method; not like Virgil

"to write ten lines, they say,  
At dawn, and lavish all the golden day  
To make them wealthier in his reader's eyes,"

but rather to throw away and begin again—begin something else.

<sup>1</sup> In a forthcoming article in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (XVIII p. 64) entitled *The Medea of Seneca*, Dr. H. L. Cleasby states his belief that Ovid's *Medea* preceded Horace's *Art of Poetry*. If his conclusions can be substantiated, we can place the first edition of *Amores* at least before 14 B. C.

I think, therefore, that after Ovid returned from his excursion into tragedy, after he had finished his *Heroides* and written a few more love-elegies, he would not have waited long before bringing out his second and final edition of *Amores*. Assuming, as I have done, 18 B. C. or thereabouts as the date of the first edition, and allowing two or three years for tragedy, a like number for *Heroides*, and a year for new *Amores*—a liberal allowance, I am convinced—we should arrive at no later date than 11 B. C. for the second edition of the *Amores*. But what, the reader may ask again, is to be done with the mention of the Art of Love in Ovid's letter to Macer?

Jacoby, in the essay above-mentioned, declares for the latest possible date for the second edition of the *Amores*. On the strength of the allusion in 2, 18, he is willing to place the second edition not only after the *Ars Amatoria* but after the *Remedia*. It would therefore immediately precede Ovid's final masterpiece, the *Metamorphoses*, which is, therefore, the *area maior* mentioned by the poet in his epilogue (*Am.* 3, 15). *Per correr miglior acqua*, the poet leaves behind him not merely his ditties in praise of the imaginary Corinna, but his tragedy, his *heroides*, his art of cosmetics, his art of love and his remedies for the same.

Pulsandast magnis area maior equis.

Unfortunately for this theory, the lines preceding these words deserve attention; they contain proof conclusive of the usual opinion that this poem is the epilogue to the first edition of the *Amores*. Ovid first bids Venus and her boy farewell:

Culte puer puerique parens Amathusia culti  
Aurea de campo vellite signa meo!

Then he declares who the new master is that calls him to a wider field:

Corniger increpuit thyrso graviore Lyaeus  
Pulsandast magnis area maior equis.

Venus at last yields the palm to Liber, who presides over tragedy and not the metamorphosis. Ovid had sketched another picture of the same contest in which the same combatants appeared with other names—Elegy and Tragedy (*Am.* 3, 1). Not inappropriately, Tragedy there used the very phrase applied to Bacchus here (l. 23 f.):

Tempus erat *thyrso pulsum graviore* moveri;  
Cessatum satis est: incipe maius opus.

In short, the poems which Ovid has placed at the beginning and end of his third book are companion-pieces. As often in Ovid,

who was born with a genius for metamorphosis, they present the opposite sides of an issue. Ovid delights in assuming contradictory attitudes, stating either case with perfect seriousness and conviction. The supreme illustration—it is by no means the only one—is the antinomy between his art of love for the gallant, his art of love for the mistress, and his remedies of love for them both. The present poems differ from these later *artes* only in setting forth a real and personal issue.

I have reasoned thus far as if inference were our only guide. But if we may trust the *textus receptus* of an important passage, Ovid himself has settled the question for us, by direct statement. Among the books which he recommends for his mistress's library (A. A. 3, 343), he appropriately includes his own *Amores*, referring explicitly to the edition in three books:

Deve tribus libris, titulo quos signat Amorum.

This statement we should accept as proof that the final edition of the *Amores* preceded the *Art of Love*, were there not the possibility of a corruption in the text of the line just cited. The only early MS of the third book of the *Art of Love*, the Parisinus of the ninth century<sup>1</sup> has not *Deve tribus* but the unintelligible *Dece cerem* (corr. *Deie*). Recent editors have conjectured *deve puer* or *decerpens* or other neat phrases which we need not discuss. Now *Deve tribus* is not a similar correction by some early editor, but, with *Deque* as occasional variant, it is the reading of fifteenth century MSS before the printed text appeared, as a glance at Jahn's edition shows; I may add that the reading is found in a Harvard MS (Lo 10, 100). Those who, with Jacoby, regard it as *eine ganz unwahrscheinliche Konjektur* (op. cit., p. 71) must admit, at least, that it antedates the editions. The whole line in the Paris MS has been badly shaken up in transmission. Editors do not hesitate to reject its meaningless reading *titulos quo* either for *titulus quos*, found in the late MSS and adopted by Jahn and others, or for *titulo quos* conjectured rightly, I believe, by Ehwald and confirmed by the Harvard MS. I think we may quite as safely regard the fifteenth century MSS as giving in *Deve (Deque) tribus libris* not a later emendation, but a genuine tradition from the archetype; the reading of the Paris MS is certainly involved in monstrous and inexplicable error, but there are other mon-

<sup>1</sup> Chatelain, *Paléographie des Classiques Latins*, gives the date correctly, as the facsimile on Pl. XCIII shows; it is not tenth century, as Merkel-Ehwald and others state.



strosities in this MS. In short, while wishing at first to argue the case without the support of the present passage, I appeal to it now, hoping, too, that my previous reasoning may help to corroborate the *textus receptus*. Two lines of evidence, therefore, lead to the conclusion that the second edition of the Amores preceded the Art of Love, and therefore the mention of *artes amoris* in the letter to Macer, cannot mean that the latter poem was already completed. According to Jacoby (loc. cit.), the statement in the letter becomes, therewith, unintelligible.

However, two possible interpretations of the passage remain. The one is that Ovid had merely begun his Art of Love at the moment of his writing to Macer. This explanation has satisfied everybody, so far as I can find out, except Jacoby. We may agree that although the historical references in the Art of Love locate it definitely between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D., Ovid may have busied himself with the plan of the poem before this time—*schon länger vorher*, Schanz says, and is inclined to regard the passages in question as later additions made when the book was published. But the supposition of later additions puts us at once on dangerous ground. I propose, therefore, giving up the ordinary explanation, to interpret the passage in the letter to Macer in the only way now remaining—that is, as not referring to the Art of Love at all.

Ovid's Amores have been subjected to severe criticism by those who expect to find there the passion of Catullus or the tender sentimentality of Tibullus. *Leblosigkeit, Rhetorik, Lüsternheit* are the qualities that Jacoby emphasizes—in a word, conventionalized lewdness. He accordingly refuses Ovid a place among the *wirkliche Dichter* in Roman elegy.<sup>1</sup> But those who know something of Ovid the wit will not fail to detect in these poems, besides Ovid's usual delight in sheer narration and clever phrase-making, a delicate travesty on the love-elegy itself. Horace had given him the hint, in such a poem as his eleventh Epode, and Ovid, revelling in the conception, works it out at length. Indecent he is, to the point of blasphemy, and interested profoundly in intrigue, but what in an emotional poet, like Tibullus, would become morbid or prurient is kept sane by Ovid's incorrigible wit. The lyric impulse would be singularly out of place in a work of this kind, granting that the poet possessed it. His purpose is not to

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 79, 97, 98. It is a pity that Jacoby's other characterizations are not so apt as that in the note on p. 98, where he seeks to temper Schanz's terrific indictment of the morality of the Amores.

unbosom what Schanz (§ 294) so sorely misses in the Amores—"des Herzens auf- und abwogende Stimmungen;" it is to observe the lover and all his ways in life and in the elegy with the subconscious purpose of making his sentimentality ridiculous. There is no room for soulfulness in such a program. One might as well deplore the lack of Puritanic religious intensity in Butler's Hudibras.

Now love-elegy of such a type as this, is, like all satire, essentially didactic. The poet's purpose is not to transcribe sensations, but to observe. Many critics have noticed this element in the Amores; it is amply illustrated by Schanz (§ 294). Ovid already is aware that his subject is the art of love: he shows this not only by his choice of themes and his manner of treating them, but by explicit avowal. I mean that the present lines refer not to his later poem, but to his Amores.

Quod licet, aut artes teneri profiteamur Amoris,  
(Ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis).

This is the same art that he has been professing all along. Perhaps in 1, 10, 59 f.—

Est quoque carminibus meritas celebrare puellas  
Dos mea; quam volui, nota fit arte mea—

he is thinking rather of the art of poetry, but another passage (2, 19, 34) echoes the meaning of the lines to Macer—

Ei mihi! ne monitis torquear ipse meis!

But apart from these and other expressions, a single passage in Tibullus suffices to prove my point. Tibullus remarks of his faithless mistress (1, 6, 9),

Ipsa miser docui quo posset ludere pacto  
Custodes; heu, heu, nunc premor arte mea.

Even before Ovid, then, the elegy had a tendency to the didactic, as its growing conventionality would lead us to expect.<sup>1</sup> Ovid furthered this tendency by adding the element of travesty, and, finally, in the master-piece of his early period, metamorphosed the love-elegy into didactic poetry—mock-didactic—out and out. But he could appropriately refer to his Amores, too, as presenting, in detachments, an art of love, and that, I am convinced, is his meaning here.

I may now sum up categorically the inferences I have drawn in interpreting anew the letter to Macer. In this letter, Ovid in-

<sup>1</sup> A point well developed by Jacoby, op. cit., p. 48, n. 3.

forms his friend that while the latter is an epic bard, for himself, he can sing of nothing but love, though there was a time when he essayed a tragedy with tolerable success. His present works are two—*Amores* and *Heroides*. The former had already appeared in an edition of five books, sometime later to be reedited, with the addition of the letter to Macer and, doubtless, other pieces, in three books. The *Heroides* he had completed, possibly a very short time before. We cannot infer that he had begun or planned his *Art of Love*. We may set 11 B. C. as a date later than which it is not probable that the second edition of *Amores* appeared. That leaves us still a long stretch before the publication of his next work, the *De Medicamine Faciei*. We know merely that this preceded the *Art of Love* and that the latter work and the *Remedia* were published between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D. I do not deny that Ovid may have planned his *Art of Love* and even written parts of it several years before. I certainly would not maintain that he could not have had several works in progress at the same time. But I do not think it was in his nature to brood long over his creations, or to subject them to the file. Rather, he would toss them off lightly, retaining but not revising whatever pleased him, throwing away whatever did not. If I am right in this inference, it is more natural to place both the inception and the completion of the *Art of Love* as near as possible to the date when we know the poem was published. If it were begun in 2 B. C., Ovid could easily have finished it in the time thus allowed. Between 11 and 2 B. C. the *De Medicamine Faciei* was written, but at just what point it is impossible to say. Ovid may well have been occupied with some of those works which are no longer extant; Bürger, in his dissertation *De Ovidi carminum amatoriorum inventione et arte*, 1901, p. 47, suggests what these may have been. Those few who believe that the double letters among the *Heroides* (XVI–XXI) are Ovid's, may perhaps wish to add them to this list. A forthcoming Harvard dissertation will seek to establish the genuineness of these poems, and to determine, so far as this is possible, their date. Granted that they are Ovid's, they may perhaps have been written at some later period. But even supposing this possibility, and admitting the fact that other undertakings would not fill the interval between the second edition of *Amores* and the *De Medicamine Faciei*, it is not necessary to assume that Ovid was intensely busy during all periods of his career.